

Social Questions

BULLETIN

of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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Rescue the Refugees!

The vast cataclysms of modern war bring millions of individual tragedies in their wake. Whole peoples are shifted, not because of mature planning for their betterment, but like cattle, en masse, and with less consideration from the herders, since human life counts for naught with the aggressor.

Pitiful as is the fate in war of native populations, there is a special poignancy in the situation of alien minorities within countries at war. Both England and France, in September, 1939, issued wholesale internment orders for aliens within their respective borders, orders which made no distinction as to political belief of the alien. In both countries, for a short time, all aliens were interned together, Nazi and anti-Nazi, Fascist and anti-Fascist.

The storm of protest of the English people, while not rapid enough to prevent wholesale deportation of aliens to Canada and Australia, was eventually able to bring about the release of many thousands of Germans and Austrians who had fled to England before the vengeance of Hitler and the Gestapo. These men and women are now free to assist in the fight for freedom. Those still remaining have been given a definite status as refugees.

In France, where the Daladier government had already interned thousands of Spanish evacuees under the most inhuman conditions, Central European and Italian anti-Nazis and anti-Fascists were interned under the most incredible system of planned starvation and privation which led to disease, epidemics, crippling and death.

Here in the United States, during 1939, very few voices were raised against this evidence of war hysteria directed, so familiarly, against the alien within the borders of the belligerent country. It was only after the fall of France, when it became crystal clear that the men and women behind barbed wire were now completely at the mercy of the dictators from whom they had fled originally, and also at the mercy of a France whose leaders now wished to emulate the conquerors, that Americans became aware of a moral responsibility to assist in the rescue of those who suffered because their ideas of liberty had made it impossible for them to make peace with the tyrants.

THE RIGHT OF ASYLUM

On Thanksgiving Day of 1795, George Washington said: "I call on you humbly and fervently to beseech the kind author of these blessings . . . to render this country more and more a safe and propitious asylum for the unfortunate of other countries."

From 1620 up to the last decade, the migration of peoples from Europe to escape religious or political persecution brought to the United States the bulk of its population which formed the basis for an expanding industrial system and for a varied culture. It brought also the benefit of great thinkers, scholars and teachers, from William Penn to Albert Einstein. America has profited by this policy. Yet at present we seem committed to an abandonment of that principle of asylum, not through policy set by the President and Congress, not through declaration and decision, after discussion, but through the simple expedient of increasing red-tape rules and regulations.

Although since March of 1938 President Roosevelt has taken a leading position on the necessity for assisting political refugees, in actual practice the agencies set up have been able to do little. It would not be minimizing the actual result to state that since June, 1940, only a few hundred such refugees have been admitted to the United States under the special provision of Emergency Visitors. A pitiful number indeed when one considers that there are some 30,000 Central Europeans and Italians interned in unoccupied France and North Africa alone, not to speak of 100,000 Spaniards.

The lives and safety of over a hundred thousand men, women and children cannot be protected by a system which examines each application in the slow machinery of governmental scrutiny. The State Department recognizes emergencies in the national and international situations, but thus far has not recognized that just as acute an emergency exists for 130,000 anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist prisoners behind French and North African barbed wire.

STARVATION, DISEASE, EXTRADITION

For two years now these men, women and children have lived in overcrowded and infested blocks of barracks, with straw for mattresses and wooden skylights for all their light and ventilation. For some, this winter is their third trial by cold. Long since, the few clothes they were permitted to bring with them have become tattered and threadbare. The restricted diet of rice or chickpeas soup with almost no bread, the unsanitary conditions, lack of plumbing and medicine, the presence of lice and rats, and the fact that the sick must sleep side by side with the well have led to a prevalence of scurvy, pellagra, dysentery, diarrhea, pneumonia and typhoid fever.

Since last Spring they have had another trial. Thousands were transported to North Africa, where they are baked by day and frozen by night, to work on the Trans-

Saharan Railway, a line to Dakar being built under the supervision of German military authorities. Many thousands of others are being hired out of the camps to French contractors to work in mines and chemical factories, enterprises which have always found it difficult to secure French labor, so primitive are the working conditions. Formerly, these contractors imported Polish, Italian and Indo-Chinese labor for this work. Now those Central Europeans who sought asylum in France from the slavery of dictatorship, are made into slaves for the chain-gangs of French production. These work-camps have all the aspects of the American "company town"; all wages (50 centimes per day) are deposited with the company stores and drawn against by the laborer. When his labor is completed, he is returned to the camp of origin.

Thousands of men thus carted about from one enterprise to another in Southern France were mindful enough of France's fate in 1939 to have volunteered for service with the French Army as "prestataire," *i.e.*, ready for any service alongside the army, the only course open to an alien outside the Foreign Legion. After the fall of France, they were interned and in a few months became slaves to be farmed out for the profit of small manufacturers.

Recently news has reached this country of a new horror that has been added to the long list already perpetrated against these refugees. German commissions have now entered the camps to discover which of the men are still capable of working. Some have already been taken, it is reported, to the Rhineland and Northern France.

FORCES FOR A FREE EUROPE

It is not premature to consider the next steps in the world conflict now going on. Dr. Harry F. Ward said in the October issue of *SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN*: "In various European nations the fight for freedom will turn into revolutionary struggles to achieve not merely self-government, but a really democratic economic and social order." We must also consider that a large number of the political refugees interned in France and North Africa are experienced fighters against privilege and injustice. They hold, if saved for future activity, the power to lead their own people in some measure when the time comes for such work.

If they are allowed to rot and die in internment camps, work camps, or under bombardment or the executioner's noose or knife, we will have allowed splendid allies in the fight for freedom to perish and thereby impoverished the occupied countries in their imminent struggle for independence and justice.

It would be well to consider how valuable such people would be in our own country and Latin America to offset the definite groups now endeavoring to popularize Nazi-Fascist ideas among us of the Americas.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE

Since June, 1940, various committees have tried to alleviate the hardship and suffering of the interned refugees. Some have concentrated on the securing of visas and transportation, notably the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Societies, with smaller groups such as the American Committee to Save Refugees, the Emergency Rescue Committee, the United American Spanish Aid Committee also assisting in this field. These and

others have also arranged for the delivery of food parcels progressively through the International Red Cross, the Portuguese Red Cross and the Unitarian Service Committee. The American Friends Service Committee has assisted women and children principally, through supplementary feeding. The Unitarian Service Committee has attempted to raise the sanitation of the camps and introduce medical treatment and education for pre-school children. The Methodist Committee for Overseas Relief has rendered general assistance.

All these efforts, and others, have been whole-hearted and sincere, but hampered at every step by lack of sufficient funds and official indifference. When many refugees possessed visas for the United States and Latin America, transportation facilities were lacking. Now that visas have expired and the prospect of obtaining new visas is dim, transportation opportunities exist on every side. Each time that arrangements have been made to assure food and clothing reaching these refugees, some new order of Switzerland, France, Portugal or the United States has made these plans impossible and necessitated a searching for new methods of aid.

The irony of the picture is completed when it is explained that the Red Cross does not intervene to help such refugees, because in spite of everything they are listed as civilian internees. The great majority of them have no governments, even in exile, to press their cases. No legal charge has ever been lodged against them, therefore no lawyer can argue their cases, no writs of habeas corpus can secure their release.

The only effective weapon has been the work of private agencies together with the force of moral pressure on the Vichy government. It was moral pressure on M. Henry Haye, Ambassador from Vichy, which secured the order that these men and women could leave if they possessed a visa for another country and a paid passage. Although in many cases this has not been sufficient to secure release, in others it has been the deciding point. Recently arrived refugees state that it was moral pressure, expressed in the American press, that ended some of the more flagrant attempts to punish internees through torture and starvation.

Obviously, while there is still the opportunity for such moral indignation to register on the authorities of Vichy, no efforts should be slackened in this respect.

THEY CAN BE SAVED

However, all efforts are still on an individual basis, which cannot solve the essential problem of mass evacuation for these men, women and children.

A plan for a Pan-American Corps of Diplomatic Protection has been proposed by the Pan-American Coordinating Committee, central body for organizations in the Western Hemisphere assisting Spanish and other refugees both in Europe and in their respective countries. This plan, similar in some ways to the Nansen Commission set up after the last war under the aegis of the League of Nations to assist Russian emigres, would be composed of the diplomatic representatives in Vichy of the 21 American Republics.

This Corps would subdivide itself into separate commissions charged with:

1. Examining and improving the conditions in camps in Southern France and North Africa;

2. Facilitating the evacuation and transportation of refugees possessing visas to the Americas or promised asylum by them;
3. Issuing identification papers to those who have lost their original citizenship;
4. Administering funds of both private agencies and governments for the benefit of the refugees. These benefits would accrue to all refugees now interned or in work camps in Southern France or North Africa.

The idea of a Pan-American Corps of Diplomatic Protection grew out of the partial success of the Mexico-Vichy agreement of August, 1940, in relation to Spanish internees. It was quickly recognized, however, that just one American country could not effect the improvements necessary. Up to this writing, ten Latin American countries have expressed approval of the plan. They are Mexico, Chile, Cuba, Colombia, Uruguay, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

A recent delegation to the State Department which took with it a petition signed by 1,115 Methodist churchmen, educators, editors and labor leaders whose signatures had been secured by Rev. Ver Lynn M. Sprague of the United American Spanish Aid Committee, was assured by Paul C. Daniels of the Pan-American Division that the plan was a "practical and humanitarian one."

What is now necessary is the initiative of the United States. If the President or the Secretary of State were to instruct Admiral Leahy, our Ambassador to Vichy, to call together the diplomatic representatives of the 21 American Republics, the plan would begin to operate and we should see a realistic approach to the problem of assisting and saving our brothers and sisters who adhere to the same ideas of liberty and justice that motivate us. (Write to Secretary of State Cordell Hull requesting him to give such instruction to Admiral Leahy.)

"For the Rescue of Refugees" by Lloyd Frankenberg, issued by the American Committee to Save Refugees, advocates the setting up of a "Refugee Administration, under emergency legislation, with adequate funds and legal powers, responsible either directly to the President or to a Cabinet officer. Its members should include experts on transportation and refugee settlement, as well as trade union members, to deal with all problems and coordinate them swiftly, efficiently and democratically." Mr. Frankenberg further suggests that "its most important and immediate provision should be the evacuation to this country of all the interned refugees in unoccupied France and North Africa without further ado."

It is obvious that such a move on the part of our own government would stimulate similar action on the part of the Latin American countries.

At the same time that we urge our own and other governments to take these initial steps, it would be well to remember, as was emphasized at the recent Emergency Refugee Conference attended by delegates of church, welfare, refugee, trade union and national group organizations, that individual efforts for the relief and transportation of these men and women should continue.

The hard winter of 1941 is on them. They lack food, clothing, medicine. The American Red Cross with its vast resources could considerably lighten their burden if it could be persuaded to find the means to overstep

certain technicalities—if, for instance, it would make some of its funds available to agencies such as the American Friends Service Committee or the Unitarian Service Committee already working in these areas.

Until these refugees are provided with a haven of rest, convalescence and preparation for the work for freedom which will call them back to their native lands, all Americans who hold the ideal of liberty and justice to be not just a national quality, but an international one, should continue and increase their efforts for immediate assistance.

LILY TURNER.

Miss Lily Turner is the Executive Secretary of the American Committee to Save Refugees, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

This organization suggests that you help by doing the following:

"1. Write your Senators and Congressman urging that Emergency Legislation be passed to make it possible to evacuate these thousands of people immediately.

"2. Write the State Department urging them to grant asylum up to the limit of present regulations.

"3. Write to President Roosevelt urging that the \$50,000,000 set aside for refugee relief be used to evacuate these thousands."

A Letter from Bishop McConnell

Dear Federation Members:

During the last fiscal year of our organization, through the addresses of our Secretaries and in the issues of our *SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN* we have made an interpretation of the social situation in the United States and the world in the light of our Statement of Purpose.

This Statement of Purpose, adopted in 1936, almost five years before the Malvern Conference, declares that:

"1. The Christian religion compels us to reject the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society.

"2. The substitute must be the method of social-economic planning under democratic control with social ownership of all things necessary to its successful operation, as the method by which the Christian principle of service and the development of personality can be progressively realized.

"3. This change is to be sought by education and democratic discussion, not by violence."

In addition to relating our Statement of Purpose to the present-day scene before church, college, university, labor and cooperative groups, our Executive and Field Secretary, Charles C. Webber, has given addresses at 28 Annual Conferences of the Methodist Church, at which he has advocated our 1940-41 Program—a program you adopted by referendum ballot—calling for:

I. *Defense of Democratic Rights*

(a) The right of minority political groups to express themselves and to a place on the ballot.

(b) The rights of labor as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, the National Labor Relations Act, the Wages and Hours Act, and the Walsh-Healey Act.

(c) The right of conscientious objectors, both religious and political, to exemption from service under military authorities.

II. Defense of Living Standards

The defense of the living standards, the health and housing of the people against the exactions of profiteers operating under the cloak of a program of national defense.

III. Support of These Measures

- (a) The Anti-lynching Bill
- (b) Abolition of the Poll Tax
- (c) Aid for War Refugees
- (d) Program of China Relief
- (e) Discontinuance of Trade with Japan
- (f) Opposition to Anti-Semitism and all forms of Race Discrimination
- (g) Consumers and Producers Cooperatives.

Furthermore, our Executive and Field Secretary presented this program at national meetings of the Canadian Fellowship for a Christian Social Order, the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice, the Public Affairs Committee of the Y.W.C.A. and the United Christian Council for Democracy, where, among pacifist and non-pacifist alike, it won approval as it had among our own members.

1941-42 Proposals

At our National Executive Committee Meeting on October 27th, we had before us the proposals of our members for our 1941-42 Program, as requested in our October BULLETIN.

Some of them read as follows: "If ever there was a time when the Federation is needed, it is now and the work before us demands the most careful consideration."

"I feel very strongly that the Federation should stick strictly to the task of advocating socialization of the economic order as the ethical application of Christianity."

"Let me urge that we pound away on the economic aspects of our church life and economic status."

"Our present program is big enough for any organization."

"Every plank in the present program still constitutes a pressing problem today."

Only three of our members differed with our decision of last year to take no position on the war as an organization, and to leave "to our members complete freedom to express themselves on the relation of the United States to the war and to act through organizations that deal specifically with that question, with-

out in any way committing or representing the Federation."

Our 1941-42 Program

After a careful consideration of all the proposals before it the National Executive Committee unanimously adopted the following statement:

The Secretaries and members of the Methodist Federation for Social Service are requested in their addresses and in the SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN:

(a) to place a primary emphasis upon our Statement of Purpose and our "Outline of a Christian Program for Social Change";

(b) to continue our defense of the democratic rights of labor, minority political, racial and religious groups, and of conscientious objectors to war;

(c) to maintain a defense of the living standards of the people;

(d) to support the specific measures set forth in our 1940-41 Program.

Finances

We are in great need of funds to finance this Program and to publish the forthcoming issues of our BULLETIN.

Our deficit on November 1st was \$1,200.

We know that you want our Fellowship to be maintained, because it is a fellowship that is a means of inspiration to hundreds of Methodists to carry on the everlasting struggle for a better world.

This is how you can help:

If your membership or subscription to the SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN has lapsed, *renew it at once*.

If you have been a \$1 or a \$2 member, *double your membership immediately*.

In case you are a \$5 a year member or more, secure one new member for us during this month.

Sincerely yours,

FRANCIS J. McCONNELL,
President, M.F.S.S.

Conference Report

North-East Ohio Conference. Excerpts from the Social Service Report as adopted by the Conference in June, 1941:

"The Function of the Church in This Hour of International Chaos. To minister to all those who suffer as a result of the ravages of war,

and to insist upon the application of some plan for feeding the hungry people of occupied Europe now.

"To offer its spiritual ministries to the victims of war, enlisted and conscripted soldiers, conscientious objectors, and their families; and to offer sanctuary to all who are oppressed."

"Race Relations. We in America have been shocked by the racial animosities engendered by certain governments abroad; but our indignation toward others ought not to blind us to conditions existing within our own borders.

"The two most flagrant violations of Christian racial standards are in our treatment of Jews and Negroes.

"We urge our own Methodist Church to set the example of Christian brotherhood by opening its hospitals, homes, restaurants, buildings, business enterprises, summer camps, conferences, and churches to our Negro brothers on a basis of equality.

"We urge the more general observance of Race Relations Sunday in our churches; the more frequent exchange of pulpits and the use of visiting speakers and choirs to deepen the friendship between the white and black races."

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